

Testimony in Support of HB-5455

Thank you, Representative Gentile and Senator Cassano and all of the members of the Planning and Development committee for allowing me to speak in support of House Bill 5455, An Act Concerning Penalties for and the Investigation of the Operation of Illegal Massage Establishments.

I am a resident of Black Rock, and I have a young child who lives in the neighborhood of Black Rock in the City of Bridgeport. Throughout the City of Bridgeport there are nine operating "spas," four of which are located in the Black Rock business corridor along Fairfield Avenue and three of which are on the footpath(s) of young children walking to and from school. The four "spas" in Black Rock are named: the Tokyo Spa at 2925 Fairfield Avenue, Chateau Health Spa at 2662 Fairfield Avenue, Mia Spa at 2742 Fairfield Avenue and The Hawaii Spa at 3486 Fairfield Avenue. The Tokyo Spa is in plain sight of the playgrounds of two elementary schools, The Black Rock Elementary School and St. Anns (St. Ann's extends through the eighth grade). The Chateau and Mia Spas, are also in close proximity to these schools and are along the walking paths of school-aged children; and are also in close proximity to our community library (The Black Rock Library), residential areas, restaurants and shops.

In our research, we have found several websites where men discuss their experiences with the women at these "spas." The links where we have found this information are as follow:

http://www.eroticmp.com/Tokyo-Spa-Bridgeport-Connecticut.htm?task=review-read&id_review=4873
<http://www.eroticmp.com/Tokyo-Spa-Bridgeport-Connecticut.htm>
<http://www.worldsexguide.org/bridgeport.txt.html>
<http://www.usasexguide.info/forum/archive/index.php/t-3512-p-5.html>

In reading the information in these links you will find that men rate their "spa" experience in terms of a sexual experience, and not a clinical one. For instance, in the link: www.worldsexguide.org, one man explicitly describes his sexual experience at the Chateau Health Spa, located at 2662 Fairfield Avenue. He writes about the verbal rates given to him for each sexual act once he was in the massage room, by the woman who worked there.

In addition to our children, our residential community, and our business community as a whole, we cannot ignore that these business also create an environment for human trafficking and the sex-slave trade. We have all heard the stories of abduction, trickery and cruelty that are imposed on women and children who are forced into a life of sexual-servitude. Unless we take a stand and stop allowing these businesses to flourish in our Cities, Towns, States, and Country, we will always be creating the "demand" that keeps the vicious cycle going. If we do not take a strong stand against these businesses - if we allow them to stay in our neighborhoods, then we as the adults, and the watchers-and-keepers of what is right and what is wrong, are sending a very strong message to our children that this was OK on our watch. This is not OK. We need to be more watchful and more caring of human life and the environments in which we all live together.

Because of evasiveness and secrecy of these businesses, our law enforcements do not have the ability to catch people in sexual acts and prosecute accordingly. We need the intervention of the State Department of Public Health to direct and assist our Local Health Department in regulating these illegitimate businesses. As a resident of Bridgeport, in Representative Grogin's Black Rock district, I urge for the passage of HB5455.

I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Barnes, Bridgeport, CT